



## ENVIRONMENTAL BOARD MOTION

Date: November 3, 2010

Subject:

Motioned By:

Seconded By:

### Recommendation

The Environmental Board strongly recommends that the attached resolution be adopted and implemented in a timely manner in anticipation of future growth and development patterns in the City of Austin's Desired Development Zone (DDZ) and eastern Travis County.

### Staff Conditions:

Not Applicable.

### Rationale

Our goal is to help provide direction for City staff to ensure that our Land Development Code and associated criteria manuals promote high quality, sustainable development in a way that best accommodates future growth while protecting the prairie streams, floodplains, and rolling hills in these unique eastern watersheds. Improved environmental protection and development standards will enhance and protect these fragile watersheds, prevent unnecessary future public expense, and increase the quality of life in an area that has been degraded due to past development activity and historic uses.

### Vote

For:

Against:

Abstain:

Absent:

Approved By:

Dr. Mary Gay Maxwell, Chair

## **RESOLUTION NO.**

**WHEREAS**, the Environmental Board works in an advisory capacity to provide recommendations to the City Council and Planning Commission as it relates to environmental regulations; and

**WHEREAS**, the “Suburban” watersheds in the Desired Development Zone (DDZ) are unique watersheds with erosive clay soils, expansive floodplains, and historic agricultural land uses; and

**WHEREAS**, the City of Austin has the responsibility to ensure that future development activity will not increase impacts to public and private property from flooding and stream erosion or create additional public expense and environmental degradation; and

**WHEREAS**, the Suburban watersheds comprise over one-half of the City of Austin’s jurisdiction and fully three-quarters of its remaining undeveloped land and are likely to experience a significant share of the projected 750,000 new residents and associated growth anticipated over the next 30 years; and

**WHEREAS**, the construction of State Highway 130 has increased the potential for accelerated growth in the Suburban watersheds; and

**WHEREAS**, existing regulations for Suburban watersheds do not provide sufficient protection of headwater streams, resulting in: reduced creek health, increased infrastructure maintenance costs, and loss of opportunity for greenway and trail connectivity; and

**WHEREAS**, the broad, alluvial floodplains comprise approximately one-sixth of all land in the Suburban watersheds and thus are more likely to be modified or channelized due to their unique topography and soil types than the narrower floodplains in the Drinking Water Protection Zone to the west; and

**WHEREAS**, the 2001 Watershed Protection Master Plan, approved by Council, called for improvements to stream setback regulations and drainage design criteria; and

**WHEREAS**, Gilleland Creek and its associated tributaries, which comprise approximately 75 square miles and one-fifth of Austin’s Suburban watershed land area, have been designated to be in non-attainment by Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ) for high levels of bacteria, creating the need for additional measures to address development impacts in these watersheds; **NOW THEREFORE**,

**BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY OF AUSTIN ENVIRONMENTAL BOARD**, that the Board recommends that the City Council and/or Planning Commission authorize the City Manager to initiate Land Development Code (LDC) and associated criteria manual changes to accomplish the following goals:

1. Improve stream buffer requirements, including critical headwater areas, to protect water quality and reduce erosion, flooding, and long-range costs for infrastructure maintenance.
2. Promote, encourage and/or require the preservation and restoration of floodplains and stream buffers as well as the beneficial re-purposing of mining quarries.

3. Explore opportunities to encourage a development pattern that better protects public and private property, preserves floodplains, creeks, and open spaces, and provides access and connectivity with greenways and trails.
4. Improve permanent stormwater controls to better moderate runoff and help reduce streambank erosion.
5. Explore better ways to regulate the modification of floodplains, including options for off-site mitigation for developments in areas that are planned for higher density developments.
6. Simplify development rules where possible.
7. Work in coordination with Travis County and neighboring communities to develop the above changes.

**ADOPTED:** November 3, 2010

**ATTEST:** \_\_\_\_\_

Dr. Mary Gay Maxwell

Environmental Board Chair

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